

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY CHIEF OF STAFF FOR PERSONNEL, G-1
USACHRA, JRTC & FT POLK CIVILIAN PERSONNEL ADVISORY CENTER
7041 RADIO ROAD
FORT POLK, LOUISIANA 71459

CIVILIAN PERSONNEL
BULLETIN NO. 13-05

30 September 2005

GENERAL NOTICE OF U.S. ARMY MEDDAC REDUCTION IN FORCE

1. The purpose of this bulletin is to notify MEDDAC, DENTAC AND VETCOM employees that reduction in force (RIF) procedures will be implemented to effect the reorganization of the Medical Maintenance Branch at Bayne-Jones Army Community Hospital (BJACH). The Deputy Surgeon General, U.S. Army Medical Command (MEDCOM) directed that MEDCOM activities reorganize medical maintenance operations to affect the "best practices" within the Army Medical Department (AMEDD) Medical Treatment Facility (MTF) medical maintenance sections. Based on this directive, the BJACH, Medical Maintenance Branch must abolish (3) encumbered Medical Equipment Repairer, WG-4805-11 positions and establish three (3) Electronics Technician (Biomedical), GS-0856 positions (2 GS-10s and 1 GS-09). Therefore, a RIF is necessary in order to place the affected employees. **It is projected that the RIF will not impact employees outside of the Medical Maintenance Branch.** RIF notices will be issued on 15 November 2005, with an effective date of 21 January 2006.

2. **REVIEW OF OFFICIAL PERSONNEL FOLDER (OPF).** In past RIFs, affected employees called the personnel office and made an appointment to review their OPFs. With regionalization and automation, it is necessary to create a more efficient and timely method to review documents contained in the Official Personnel Folder (OPF). Since the OPF is now maintained at the Civilian Personnel Operations Center (CPOC), Redstone Arsenal, Alabama, and Notifications of Personnel Action (SF-50s) are documented in the Department of the Army's SF-50 Database, the following procedures will apply for review of official records:

a. If the employee was hired by the Department of Army **after March 29, 1998**, copies of SF-50s will be provided by the Resource Management Division (RMD). The RMD can assist by obtaining copies from the SF-50 History Database, if necessary.

b. If the employee was hired by the Department of Army **prior to March 29, 1998**, the employee must review SF-50s from the copy of the OPF furnished prior to regionalization. The RMD can assist in obtaining copies from the SF-50 History Database of actions effective on or after March 29, 1998, if necessary.

c. Requests to the CPOC for an employee's OPF will occur only in extenuating circumstances.

3. The official cutoff date for receipt of updates in the Civilian Personnel Advisory Center

(CPAC) for this RIF is close of business on **14 October 2005**.

4. It is important to understand that RIF processes occur within the guidelines of RIF regulations derived from the Veterans' Preference Act of 1944 and presently codified in Sections 3501-3503 of Title 5, United States Code. The law provides that RIF regulations must take into account four factors in releasing employees: Tenure; veterans' preference; length of service; and performance ratings. RIF procedures are complex, and it is helpful to have as much information as possible concerning how the RIF process works. Let's begin by looking at the following:

a. **COMPETITIVE AREA:** Before RIF begins, the competitive areas are identified as those boundaries within which employees compete for assignment under reduction in force. Employees within a competitive area compete only with each other; they do not bump, retreat, or otherwise compete with employees in another competitive area. Competitive areas are also controlled by the commuting area. The competitive area for this reduction in force is the U.S. Army Medical Activity (MEDDAC), the U.S. Army Dental Activity (DENTAC) and the U.S. Army Veterinary Command (VETCOM).

b. **COMPETITIVE LEVEL:** Next, similar positions are grouped together into competitive levels for RIF competition. A competitive level consists of positions in the competitive area that are in the same grade (or occupational level), in the same classification series, and similar enough in duties, qualification requirements, pay schedules, and working conditions so that the incumbent of one position can successfully perform the critical elements of any other position in the same competitive level, without any loss of productivity beyond that normally expected in the orientation of any new but fully qualified employee. Positions with different types of work schedules are placed in different competitive levels. Positions of supervisors and management officials are placed in competitive levels comprised only of these type positions. Also, competitive and excepted service positions are placed in separate competitive levels, with each RIF run separately.

c. **RETENTION STANDING:** The controlling elements for retention standing are: the competitive area, the competitive level, and the retention register. Reduction in force is invoked in retention order beginning with the employee with the highest overall retention, regardless of grade level. When employees in the same retention subgroup have identical service dates, the employee with the highest current performance rating will be determined to have the highest retention standing. If current performance ratings are identical, then the employee with the most service in his/her current position without a break in service will be determined to have the highest retention standing.

d. **RETENTION REGISTERS:** Next, the four retention factors are applied to create a retention register. As earlier mentioned, they are tenure, veterans' preference, length of service, and performance. The following four retention factors are applied and employees are listed on the retention register in the order of their retention standing as follows:

(1) **TENURE GROUP.** Employees are ranked in a retention register in three groups:

(a) **GROUP I-Career Employees** who are not serving probation.

(b) GROUP II-Career-Conditional employees and career employees serving a probationary period.

(c) GROUP III-Employees serving under term and similar non-status appointment.

NOTE: Temporary employees are non-competing employees for RIF purposes and may be separated without RIF procedures

(2) VETERANS PREFERENCE. Each tenure group is divided into three subgroups reflecting the employees' entitlement to veterans' preference:

(a) SUBGROUP AD-Preference eligible veterans with a compensable service-connected disability of 30 percent or more.

(b) SUBGROUP A-Veterans not included in subgroup AD.

(c) SUBGROUP B-Non-Veterans. This group also includes retired members who do not meet the criteria for veterans' preference for RIF purposes.

NOTES: In order to receive veterans' preference, an honorable or general discharge is necessary. Guard or Reserve active duty for training purposes does NOT qualify for veterans' preference.

A **retired member** of the armed forces is considered to be a veteran for RIF purposes only if the veteran meets one of the following: (1) The armed forces retirement is based upon a disability that either resulted from injury or disease received in the line of duty as a direct result of armed conflict, or was caused by an instrumentality of war incurred in the line of duty during a period of war; (2) The armed forces retirement is not based upon 20 or more years of full-time active service; or (3) the employee has been continuously employed for the Government since November 30, 1964, without a break in service of more than 30 days. (If the veteran meets condition (3) but retired at the rank of major or higher (or equivalent), he or she must also meet the general definition of disabled veteran in Section 2108(2) of Title 5, United States Code, in order to be a veteran for RIF purposes

(3) LENGTH OF SERVICE. Within each tenure subgroup, employees are ranked for RIF retention by service dates. The service date includes creditable civilian and military service with additional service credit for certain performance ratings.

(4) PERFORMANCE. Employees in each subgroup are ranked ahead of those with less service and receive extra service credit for RIF based on the average of the last three ratings of record received during a four-year period. Employees receive extra credit only for ratings of Fully Successful or above. An employee's service computation date is adjusted for RIF purposes based on this average (rounded in the case of a fraction to the next higher whole number). The four-year period begins with the cutoff date established for receipt of performance appraisals in the CPAC and the **cutoff date for this RIF is close of business on 17 August**

2005.

(a) If an employee received more than three annual ratings during the four-year period, the three most recent annual ratings of record are used.

(b) If an employee received less than three annual ratings during the four-year period, the values of the actual ratings given are added together and averaged.

(c) If an employee has no ratings of record, the employee will receive credit based on the performance rating most often given to employees in the competitive area. This is called a "modal rating."

(d) In determining this average, the value assigned to each annual performance rating of record is as follows:

(1) "Outstanding (O)" - Twenty (20) additional years of service;

(2) "Exceeds Fully Successful (EFS)" - Sixteen (16) additional years of service; and

(3) "Fully Successful (FS)" - Twelve (12) additional years of service.

e. **RELEASE:** Once all abolish actions are identified, the RIF process begins. Employees are released from the competitive level in the inverse order of their retention standing. If an employee's job is abolished, and there are no vacant positions within the competitive level, and there is a lower standing employee on the retention register, the person whose job is abolished has the right to displace the employee at the bottom of the retention register. Within each subgroup, employees with less service are released before employees with more service. The employee may be in another division, branch, or organization. This displacement is not considered a RIF action, but the subsequent action to place the employee who is "released" from the competitive level is a RIF action.

f. **ASSIGNMENT RIGHTS:** This is the right of a competitive service employee to be assigned (by bump or retreat) to a position in a different competitive level held by another employee with lower standing on a retention register. An employee has assignment rights to positions up to three grades, or three grade intervals, lower than the position from which they are released. An employee in retention subgroup AD has expanded retreat rights up to five grades or intervals lower than the position held. All employees identified to be released from their competitive level are placed in retention standing order. The employee who has the highest overall retention standing, regardless of grade level, is placed first, the employee with the next higher retention standing is placed next, etc. In the event two employees are identical in retention standing, a tiebreaker is used to determine which employee is affected. Employees are entitled to a position that requires no reduction, or the least possible reduction in representative rate, within the grade limits for RIF assignment. The first consideration is positions at the same grade, with vacancies being considered first, then bumping, and then retreating. The next grade considered is the next higher representative rate grade position, with vacancies at that grade being considered first, then bumping, then retreating, etc.

NOTE: Temporary employees have no assignment rights and do not compete in reduction-in-force. Mandatory separation is required for those temporary employees who occupy the same competitive level as competing employees reached for release from that competitive level. Also, re-employed civil service annuitants do not compete in reduction in force and must be separated before competing employees are released from the competitive level. Employees on temporary assignment (e.g. promotion or detail) compete for retention in the competitive level of their permanent position.

(1) **BUMPING.** This is displacing an employee in a lower tenure group or lower subgroup within the released employee's own tenure group. Although the released employee must be qualified for the position, including any minimum education requirements, it may be to a position never held before. The bumping process works as follows:

(a) Subgroup IAD: May bump IA, IB or anyone in Group II or III, but may not bump another IAD.

(b) Subgroup IA: May bump IB, or anyone in Group II or III, but may not bump another IA.

(c) Subgroup IB: May Bump group II and III, but not another IB.

(d) Subgroup IIAD: May bump IIA, IIB or anyone in Group III, but not another IIAD.

(e) Subgroup IIA: May bump IIB or anyone in Group III, but not another IIA.

(f) Subgroup IIB: May bump Group III, but not another IIB.

(g) Subgroup III: Have no assignment rights.

(2) **RETREATING.** This means displacing an employee in the same tenure group and subgroup who has less service. The position into which the employee is retreating must also be the same position (or essentially identical position) previously held by the released employee in any Federal Agency. For example, a 1A employee might be able to retreat to the position of another 1A employee who has less service. Retreat is used when it enables assignment to a higher representative rate position than bumping provides. Placement by retreat is not allowed if an employee can bump another employee in a lower subgroup at the same grade.

(3) **VACANT POSITIONS.** In order to cause the least possible disruption, identified vacant positions within the competitive area will be used in RIF placements, if they fully satisfy or equal your assignment rights. An employee's right to a vacant position is the same as bump or retreat. Vacant positions below one's assignment rights may also be used as Non-Rif offers to place an employee in lieu of RIF separation or other RIF actions. Placement through RIF procedures to vacant positions in other competitive areas at Fort Polk is not allowed.

g. GRADES, GRADE-INTERVALS AND EQUIVALENTS: The grade limits of an employee's assignment rights are determined by the grade progression of the position from which the

employee is released. Some General Schedule jobs have 1-grade progression, e.g., GS-5-6-7-8; others have a 2-grade progression, e.g., GS-5-7-9-11. Fort Polk has established the normal line of progression for each occupational series and grade level for Federal Wage System positions. When two positions are in different pay schedules, representative rates are used to determine equivalent grade levels and the best offer. A representative rate is the fourth step of the grade for General Schedule positions and the second step of the grade for Federal Wage System positions. The highest grade permitted in the other pay schedule is the highest grade with a representative rate that does not exceed the employee's current representative rate. The lowest grade permitted in the other pay schedule is the lowest grade with a representative rate that is not less than the representative rate of the lowest grade to which the employee has bump or retreat rights.

h. WAIVER OF QUALIFICATIONS: Except when waiver of qualifications is invoked, employees must meet OPM qualification requirements, including physical qualifications, before assignment to a position. After assignment rights have been considered for all employees in retention order standing, waiver of qualifications may be considered to make an offer or improve an offer. A waiver will only be used for vacant positions and positive educational requirements may not be waived. In addition, a waiver will only be allowed when it has been determined that the employee has the capacity, adaptability, and special skills needed to satisfactorily perform the duties and responsibilities of the position. Technical subject matter experts will assist management in making this determination.

i. PLACEMENT & TRANSITION ASSISTANCE: The Department of Defense (DoD) has earned a well deserved reputation for making every effort to ensure continuing employment for employees affected by actions related to RIF. When RIF or other unavoidable actions become necessary, placement assistance programs are available through DoD and local state agencies. An overview of these programs is provided as follows:

(1) DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE PRIORITY PLACEMENT PROGRAM (PPP). DoD policy is to minimize the adverse effects on employees due to RIF and the primary tool used to implement this policy is the PPP. It is an automated referral program that consists of several subprograms and is highly successful in the placement within DoD of adversely affected employees. Eligible permanent career/career-conditional employees in the competitive service and permanent excepted service employees with or without personal competitive status may register in this program. Employees who receive a specific RIF notice of separation or demotion are eligible to register. Under certain conditions, early registration is allowed. Normally eligible employees remain registered until they are placed, decline a valid offer, are otherwise deleted, or until 12 months after the effective date of separation from the permanent position. Registration is mandatory for employees entitled to severance pay. Relocation expenses through PPP are borne by the government to the maximum extent authorized. Employees in receipt of a demotion RIF notice will remain in PPP until the effective date of position change, until placed, or decline a valid offer. If not placed through PPP prior to demotion, the registration is changed to the DoD Retained Grade Placement Program (Program "R").

(2) DoD RETAINED GRADE PLACEMENT PROGRAM (PROGRAM "R"). AN employee on a permanent competitive and/or excepted appointment, who is serving under grade retention as

a result of RIF or job reclassification, is required to register in this program. Normally, the area of referral for the duration of the retained grade period must include all DoD installations in the commuting area. However, if the employee is relocated to the current DoD activity at government expense, registration is restricted to the new installation for one year. If an offer is made through this program, the written offer must be accepted or retained grade entitlement is lost.

(3) DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE OUTPLACEMENT REFERRAL SYSTEM (DORS). DORS is an automated referral system established and operated through a cooperative effort between DoD and the Office of Personnel Management (OPM). The purpose of DORS is to provide maximum placement opportunity for current DoD personnel and their spouses through referral to other DoD activities, non-DoD Federal Agencies, state and local governments, and the private sector. Registration and placement through DORS is strictly voluntary and should not be confused with the Department's mandatory Priority Placement Program (PPP). It is not available for temporary or term Employees.

(4) INTERAGENCY CAREER TRANSITION ASSISTANCE PLAN (ICTAP). If the employee is a displaced career or career conditional employee or former career or career-conditional employee, ICTAP provides priority consideration and selection in other Federal agencies. To be eligible, the employee must, be separated or facing separation; have a fully successful or equivalent performance rating (current or last received); submit an application to the agency having the vacancy; and be well qualified for the vacant position. The vacancy must be in the same commuting area as the location where the employee is being separated. If the employee meets the eligibility requirements, the agency must select him/her before hiring outside the agency. The program requires publication of job information on all Federal vacancies for this purpose. Eligibility for ICTAP begins on the date the agency issues a specific RIF separation notice and ends one year from the separation date. The application submitted must comply with all job announcement instructions and a copy of the RIF separation notice must be attached.

(5) REEMPLOYMENT PRIORITY LIST (RPL).

(a) An RPL registrant with career status is retained on the list for two years from the date of separation. An employee with career-conditional status is retained on the list for one year. Reemployment Priority List registrants will be given priority consideration in filling vacancies, within the commuting area, that are no higher than the grade(s) from which they were separated and for which they are qualified. An employee's name will be removed from the RPL List as follows: (1) upon the employee's written request, (2) when accepting full-time non-temporary Federal employment, or (3) when declining employment at a grade level equivalent to the one from which separated or scheduled to be separated. To be entered on the RPL, an employee must submit a current SF 171, an OF 612, or a resume to the Civilian Personnel Advisory Center within 30 calendar days of the RIF separation date. To be eligible to apply, an employee must meet all of the following conditions:

- (1) Be in the competitive service in tenure group I or II;

(2) Have received a performance rating above unacceptable as the last annual performance rating of record.

(3) Have received a specific RIF notice of separation or a Certification of Expected Separation.

(4) Have not declined an offer as defined under Subpart G, 5 CFR, Chapter 351.

(b) An employee who believes that his reemployment priority rights under this program have been violated may appeal to the MSPB.

(6) **WORKFORCE INVESTMENT ACT (WIA) PROGRAM.** Title III of the Job Training Partnership Act makes State programs available to Federal employees adversely affected by reduction in force. The Workforce Investment Act (WIA) Services offered by the State of Louisiana for dislocated workers provides in-depth skills assessment and aptitude testing, job placement assistance, and education and occupational skills training. The CPAC will forward the resume to the one of the Workforce Centers, but only with the employee's written consent. Workforce Centers are located in DeRidder, Leesville and Oberlin. For additional information, please visit their web site www.LAWORKS.net.

j. **SEVERANCE PAY:** An employee serving under a full-time or part-time regularly scheduled tour of duty may be entitled to severance pay if separation is involuntary and he/she has been on the rolls in the Federal Service for at least the previous 12 calendar months. This may include service in both non-temporary and temporary appointments, providing there was not a break in service of more than three calendar days between appointments. If eligible upon separation to an immediate annuity from a Federal civilian retirement system or uniformed services retirement system, an employee is ineligible for severance pay. Severance pay funds (that is, the maximum amount of severance pay one may receive) is determined on the basis of the basic rate of pay at the time of separation and years of creditable civilian service (basic allowance). Employees over 40 years of age receive an age adjustment allowance as part of the formula. The basic allowance is computed on the basis of one week's basic salary for each year of creditable service for service up to 10 years, and two week's basic salary for each year of service thereafter. The age adjustment allowance is computed on the basis of 10 percent of the basic allowance for each year over 40 years of age. The RIF separation notice and Notification of Personnel Action (SF50B) will reflect the amount of severance pay entitlement.

k. **DISCONTINUED SERVICE RETIREMENT:** If the employee's position is abolished and he/she meets the age and service requirements for discontinued service retirement, the employee will receive a notice of discontinued service retirement eligibility before RIF letters are issued. Additional criteria must be met if the employee retires after RIF notices are issued. If the employee meets the age and service requirements for discontinued service retirement and is scheduled for involuntary separation by RIF or declines an offer of continuing employment which will result in a reduction of 3 or more grades or pay levels, he/she may be entitled to an annuity under the discontinued service provisions of the Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS) or the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS). The age and service

requirements are:

(1) Attained the age of 50 and completed 20 years of creditable service, including 5 years of civilian service, OR

(2) Regardless of age, completed 25 years of creditable service, including 5 years civilian service, AND

In addition to the above, CSRS employees must have been employed under the retirement system for at least one year within the 2-year period immediately before separation. This provision does not apply to FERS employees.

I. COMPETITIVE service versus EXCEPTED service. Employees in the "excepted" service have no assignment rights to positions outside the excepted service competitive levels. The excepted service includes all positions in the executive branch of the Federal Government, which are specifically excepted from the competitive service by or pursuant to statute, by the President or by OPM.

5. Point of Contact for this information is Ms. Krista Lowery, 531-6805 or Ms. Gloria Ricks at 531-6500.

6. We trust that the information provided in this bulletin will assist you in better understanding and dealing with your personal situation should you be affected by this reduction in force. You should not consider any reduction in force action as a reflection upon your performance, conduct or value to Fort Polk.

//original signed//
DONALD R. MALLETT
Director of Civilian Personnel
Advisory Center

DISTRIBUTION:
USAMEDDAC Employees
DENTAC Employees
VETCOM Employees